

PATENT
Atty. Dkt. No. ROC920010125US1
MPS Ref. No.: IBMK10125

IN THE CLAIMS:

Please amend the claims as follows:

1. (Currently Amended) A method [[of]] for providing viewership information to a plurality of television viewers, comprising:

collecting viewership data of a plurality of viewers, wherein the viewership data comprises a plurality of counts corresponding to a plurality of time intervals for each program, and wherein each count represents a number of viewers of a respective program during a respective time interval;

processing the viewership data to provide on-screen interface information; and
transmitting, to a plurality of end-user receivers, the on-screen interface information and data for an electronic program guide, wherein the on-screen interface information is viewable in one or more graphical representations of the plurality of counts displayed along with each respective program entry displayed by the electronic program guide on displays connected to the plurality of end-user receivers.

2. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1, wherein transmitting the on-screen interface information further comprises transmitting data representing an interest level of the plurality of viewers in a particular program currently airing, wherein the interest level is calculated based on an amount of time spent by the plurality of viewers watching the particular program.

3. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1, wherein transmitting the on-screen interface information further comprises transmitting data representing a growth rate of viewers for a particular program.

4. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1, wherein the viewership data is collected from at least some a defined group of the plurality of end-user receivers.

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5. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein the plurality of viewers is at least a portion of the general television-viewing public.
6. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1, wherein the on-screen interface information comprises historical viewership information and current viewership information, wherein each of the historical and the current viewership information is viewable utilizing one or more respective graphical representations.
7. (Currently Amended) The method of claim [[1]] 4, wherein transmitting the on-screen interface information comprises transmitting group information comprising group members of a predefined the defined group.
8. (Currently Amended) The method of claim [[1]] 7, wherein transmitting the on-screen interface information comprises transmitting group information indicating how many members of [[a]] the defined group are watching a program.
9. (Currently Amended) The method of claim [[1]] 7, wherein transmitting the on-screen interface information comprises transmitting group information indicating a group rating for a program.
10. (Currently Amended) The method of claim [[1]] 7, wherein transmitting the on-screen interface information comprises transmitting group information indicating which members of [[a]] the defined group are watching a program.
11. (Original) The method of claim 10, wherein the members are identified by: extracting member identification information from the viewership data; and referencing a database containing group information.
12. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1, wherein the on-screen interface information [[is]] includes on-screen program guide formatting information.

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13. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 12, wherein the data for the electronic program guide is utilized to display an [[the]] on-screen program guide information comprises comprising programming information for a plurality of television channels.

14. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein the on-screen interface information is transmitted from a television program provider servicing the plurality of viewers.

15. (Original) The method of claim 14, wherein the television program provider is one of a cable provider and a satellite provider.

16. (Currently Amended) A signal processing unit for processing television signals, comprising:

a first connector for receiving a video signal transmitted from a remote provider;
a second connector for receiving a viewership signal containing viewership data collected from a plurality of viewers, wherein the viewership data comprises a plurality of counts corresponding to a plurality of time intervals for each program, and wherein each count represents a number of viewers of a respective program during a respective time interval;

a memory containing an on-screen guide interface formatable with the viewership data; and

a processor configured to format the on-screen guide interface with the viewership data, wherein the viewership data is formatted as one or more graphical representations of the plurality of counts displayed along with each respective program entry displayed with an electronic program guide.

17. (Original) The signal processing unit of claim 16, wherein the remote provider is one of a cable provider and a satellite provider.

18. (Original) The signal processing unit of claim 16, wherein the first connector and the second connector are a single common connector.

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19. (Original) The signal processing unit of claim 16, wherein the viewership signal is transmitted by the remote provider.
20. (Original) The signal processing unit of claim 16, wherein the viewership data comprises viewership behavior information representing a behavior of viewers with respect to television programming.
21. (Original) The signal processing unit of claim 16, wherein the processor is configured to filter the viewership data.
22. (Currently Amended) The signal processing unit of claim 16, wherein the processor is configured to format an on-screen guide interface with graphical viewership indicators ~~using the viewership data comprising at least one graphical representations of one of a current viewership, a historical viewership and a transient viewership.~~
23. (Currently Amended) The signal processing unit of claim 16, wherein the processor is configured to format an on-screen guide interface with graphical viewership indicators using the viewership data, wherein the graphical viewership indicators indicate viewership interest level in at least one program being transmitted in the video signal, wherein the viewership interest level is calculated based on an amount of time spent by the plurality of viewers watching the particular program.
24. (Currently Amended) The signal processing unit of claim 16, wherein the processor is configured to format an on-screen guide interface with viewership indicators using the viewership data, wherein the viewership indicators indicate viewership interest a viewership growth rate in at least one program being transmitted in the video signal.
25. (Currently Amended) An on-screen program guide information provider system, comprising:

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a first network connection with a plurality of devices configured to collect viewership data of a plurality of television viewers, wherein the viewership data comprises a plurality of counts corresponding to a plurality of time intervals for each program, and wherein each count represents a number of viewers of a respective program during a respective time interval;

a second network connection with a plurality of end-user receivers; and
a processor configured to:

(i) process the viewership data to provide on-screen guide formatting information;

(ii) transmit, via the second network connection, the on-screen guide formatting information to the plurality of end-user receivers, wherein the on-screen guide formatting information is used by the end-user receivers to output viewership indicators to displays connected to the plurality of end-user receivers, wherein each viewership indicator comprise one or more graphical representations of the plurality of counts displayed along with each respective program entry displayed with an electronic program guide.

26. (Currently Amended) The system of claim 25, wherein the on-screen guide formatting information comprises an interest level of the plurality of viewers in a particular program currently airing, wherein the interest level is calculated based on an amount of time spent by the plurality of viewers watching the particular program.

27. (Original) The system of claim 25, wherein the on-screen guide formatting information comprises a growth rate of viewers for a particular program.

28. (Original) The system of claim 25, wherein the on-screen guide formatting information comprises viewership behavior information representing a behavior of the plurality of viewers with respect to television programming.

29. (Original) The system of claim 25, wherein the first network connection and the second network connection are a same network connection.

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30. (Currently Amended) The system of claim 25, wherein the plurality of devices and the plurality of end-user receivers are a same device respectively same devices.

31. (Currently Amended) The system of claim 25, wherein ~~on-screen-guide~~ ~~formatting information comprises a growth rate of viewers for a particular program, the~~ ~~viewership indicators further comprise at least one graphical representations of one of a~~ ~~current viewership, a historical viewership and a transient viewership.~~

32. (Original) The system of claim 25, further comprising a television program transmission system configured to transmit television program signals to the end-user receivers.

33. (Currently Amended) The system of claim 25, further comprising an external news server in communication with the processor, wherein the processor is further configured to determine whether a particular program is significant based on at least one of a size and a growth rate of a current viewing audience, and for each significant program, transmit an alert information to the plurality of end-user receivers.

34. (Original) The system of claim 25, wherein the viewership data is collected from at least some of the plurality of end-user receivers.

35. (Original) The system of claim 25, wherein each of the end-user receivers is located in different residential buildings.

36. (Original) The system of claim 25, wherein the plurality of television viewers is at least a portion of the general television-viewing public.

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37. (Original) The system of claim 25, further comprising a database containing group information and wherein the processor is configured to determine which members of a group are watching a program using the group information and the viewership data.

38. (Original) The system of claim 25, further comprising a database containing group information and wherein the processor is configured to determine how many members of a group are watching a program using the group information and the viewership data.

39. (Currently Amended) A computer data signal embodied in a transmission medium, comprising on-screen program guide interface information containing viewership information of a plurality of television viewers, wherein the viewership information comprises a plurality of counts corresponding to a plurality of time intervals for each program, wherein each count represents a number of viewers of a respective program during a respective time interval, wherein the on-screen interface information is readable by a plurality of receivers having a network connection with a television program provider and wherein viewership information is configured for formatting an on-screen program guide to include one or more graphical representations of the plurality of counts displayed along with each respective program entry displayed with the on-screen program guide.

40. (Original) The computer data signal of claim 39, wherein viewership information comprises viewer behavior information indicating a behavior of the plurality of television viewers with respect to television programs.

41. (Original) The computer data signal of claim 39, wherein the viewership information comprises current viewership information representing viewing behavior of the plurality of television viewers currently watching a television program.

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42. (Original) The computer data signal of claim 39, wherein viewership information comprises at least one of historical viewership information and current viewership information.

43. (Original) The computer data signal of claim 39, further comprising programming information for a plurality of television channels.

44. (Original) The computer data signal of claim 39, wherein the viewership information comprises group information indicating which members of a group are watching a program.

45. (Original) The computer data signal of claim 39, wherein the viewership information comprises group information indicating how many members of a group are watching a program.

46. (Original) The computer data signal of claim 39, wherein the viewership information is transmitted from a television program provider servicing the plurality of television viewers.

47. (Original) The computer data signal of claim 46, wherein the television program provider is one of a cable provider and a satellite provider.